

## **USDA Forest Service, National Forest System, Region 6 – Pacific NW**

### **MEMBERSHIP BALANCE PLAN**

#### **1. Committee's Official Designation**

Northwest Forest Plan Area Advisory Committee (Committee).

#### **2. Authority**

The Committee is established under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, as amended (FACA; 5 U.S.C. App. 2) and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA; 16 U.S.C. sec. 1612).

#### **3. Objectives and Scope of Activities**

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and pragmatic recommendations regarding potential regional scale land management planning approaches and solutions to these challenges in the context of the 2012 planning rule. Significant changes in ecological and social conditions across the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) area require the US Forest Service and its partners to evaluate existing management direction and consider new approaches to meet the intent of the NWFP, manage for landscapes that are adapted to climate change and resilient to wildfire, and provide for increasing use of and demands from national forest system lands. These changes have been experienced first-hand through plan implementation and are further documented in monitoring reports, the U.S. Forest Service's "Science Synthesis to Inform Plan Revisions Within the Northwest Forest Plan Area" (2018) (Science Synthesis), and "Bioregional Assessment of Northwest Forests" (2020). The agency further recognizes in the "Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests" the need to address at landscape scale the increased frequency, intensity, and scale of wildfires brought on by fire exclusion and increased fuel densities, a warmer climate, and continued development into fire-prone landscapes. Similar challenges are discussed in Executive Order 14072: Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies.

For the purposes of this committee, the geographic scope includes in their entirety all the US Forest Service administrative units amended by the NWFP. Units in the Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) include: Deschutes National Forest, Fremont-Winema National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Mt. Hood National Forest, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Olympic National Forest, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Siuslaw National Forest, Umpqua

National Forest, and Willamette National Forest. Units in the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) include: Klamath National Forest and Butte Valley National Grassland, Lassen National Forest, Mendocino National Forest, Modoc National Forest, Six Rivers National Forest, and Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

#### **4. Points of View Needed for the Committee**

This Committee will be comprised of not more than 20 members. This Committee will have a balanced membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed within each of the following three categories of interests:

1. Science: Up to 9 members who represent the scientific community, and have an understanding in the following disciplines and how they relate to the NWFP area:
  - a. Forest ecology
  - b. Vegetation management
  - c. Fire ecology
  - d. Terrestrial wildlife ecology
  - e. Aquatic and riparian ecosystems and species
  - f. Climate change
  - g. Social science
  - h. Adaptive management and planning
  - i. Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge (ITEK) practitioners
2. Organizations: Up to 7 members who represent a broad array of organizations who share a collective interest in the health and sustainability of the National Forest System lands within the NWFP area:
  - a. National, regional, or local conservation organizations with staff and active programs in the Pacific Northwest
  - b. Forest products industry
  - c. Wildlife organization
  - d. Recreation organization
  - e. Organization involved in outreach with underserved communities
  - f. Forest collaborative groups
  - g. Watershed organization
3. Government and Public: Up to 4 members who represent governmental entities or the public at-large:
  - a. Member of the affected public at large
  - b. Represent state governments
  - c. Represent counties
  - d. Represent American Indian Tribes

Members will serve a 2-year term limit. For continuity purposes, members may be considered to serve an additional 2-year term at the pleasure of the Secretary, if the committee is renewed.

The committee will represent to the extent possible a balance across the three states covered by the NWFP (Oregon, Washington, California). It is important that these Committee members represent not only diverse professional backgrounds but also fairly represent the geographic and demographic composition of the NWFP area.

The committees' activities could have implications for the eighty-nine federally recognized American Indian tribes who have identified tribal lands, ancestral territory, or usual and accustomed areas within the NWFP boundary. The standards and guidelines in the NWFP require monitoring of tribal trust resources, and recent monitoring reports recommend that the Forest Service works to encourage tribal participation in intergovernmental forums, increase opportunities for collaboration in planning and management, and increase incorporation of traditional knowledge into management actions, among other goals. As one step towards addressing these needs, the committee perspectives outlined above explicitly include committee members who represent American Indian Tribes and traditional ecological knowledge practitioners.

The NWFP area spans seventy-two counties with varying population characteristics, including in terms of racial minorities, low-income communities, and other underserved communities. The perspectives for members discussed above specifically includes a representative from an organization involved in outreach with underserved communities. In addition, by including social science, in addition to biophysical disciplines, the committee will include representatives with knowledge of research on how issues discussed by the committee affect underserved communities.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the membership of this Committee is balanced, nevertheless, USDA recognizes that committee membership is not static and may change, depending on the work of the committee.

## **5. Other Balance Factors**

Equal opportunity practices in accordance with United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) policies will be followed in all appointments to the committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have considered the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership shall include to the greatest extent possible, committee membership from geographically diverse locations and communities; and include ethnic diversity, men, women, and people with disabilities.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, political beliefs, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

## **6. Quorum Requirements**

A simple majority of the members of the committee must be present to constitute an official meeting of the committee. Attendance may be in-person, by telephone, or by

other electronic means. Meetings held in-person are pursuant to the direction of any policies including current restrictions and/or limitations surrounding public participation.

## **7. Candidate Identification Process**

A Federal register notice will be issued announcing the opportunity to serve on the Committee. In addition to the Federal register notice, advertising in newspapers, radio, websites, and social media may be used to announce the opportunity to serve on the Committee. These announcements will include an overview and the purpose of the Committee, the application process and contact information. In addition, a message announcing the opportunity to serve on the committee will be sent via the planning rule listserv (available to anyone who chooses to self-subscribe online) and other mailing lists that have been developed/maintained by local unit and regional office staffs. Contacts will be made with State and County elected officials, interest groups, community leaders, and key stakeholders. Outreach activities will be targeted at engaging diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as men, women, and people with disabilities; diverse geographic and community representation; and a broad range of public interests. The Outreach plan provides additional details on the process of seeking nominees. Vacancies will be filled with individuals selected from the resulting pool of nominations.

Nominations will be received by the Pacific Planning Service Group staff:

- From individual self-nominations for a particular category;
- In response to solicitations sent to Federal, State, Tribal and local governments;
- In response to solicitations sent to academia;
- In response to solicitations sent to regional and local NGOs;
- In response to solicitations sent to organization involved in outreach with underserved communities;
- In response to solicitations communicated in press releases and advertising; and
- From the published Federal Register Notice.

Committee members will be appointed based on their expertise and knowledge in the areas outlined in section 4 of this document. A vacancy on the Committee will be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

Once candidates have been identified, their names and background data are submitted to the USDA White House Liaison's office for vetting. The vetting process includes a background check to determine if any of the candidates have a conflict of interest that would prohibit them from serving on the committee due to criminal or ethical violations.

## **8. Subcommittee Balance**

The balance plan for any subcommittee shall incorporate the same policies and practices as the parent committee.

## **9. Legal Background**

Section 5(b)(2) of the FACA requires “...the membership of the advisory committee to be fairly balanced in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed by the advisory committee.” The corresponding FACA regulations reiterate this requirement at 41 CFR § 102-3.30(c), and, for discretionary committees being established, renewed, or reestablished, require agencies to provide a description of their plan to attain balanced membership during the charter consultation process with GSA (41 CFR § 102-3.60(b)(3)). The document created through this process is the Membership Balance Plan. The regulations further clarify that (1) the purpose of the membership balance plan is to ensure “that, in the selection of members for the advisory committee, the agency will consider a cross-section of those directly affected, interested, and qualified, as appropriate to the nature and functions of the advisory committee;” and (2) “[a]dvisory committees requiring technical expertise should include persons with demonstrated professional or personal qualifications and experience relevant to the functions and tasks to be performed.” (41 CFR § 102-3.60(b)(3)).

FACA mandates that Federal advisory committees be balanced in the points of view represented by the members but leaves it to the discretion of each agency on how to do this. The FACA regulations offer guidance in achieving a balanced Federal advisory committee membership, which include considering:

- (i) The Federal advisory committee’s mission.
- (ii) The geographic, ethnic, social, economic, or scientific impact of the Federal advisory committee’s recommendations.
- (iii) The types of specific perspectives required, such as those of consumers, technical experts, the public at-large, academia, business, or other sectors.
- (iv) The need to obtain divergent points of view on the issues before the Federal advisory committee; and
- (v) The relevance of State, local, or tribal governments to the development of the Federal advisory committee’s recommendations.” (41 CFR § III of App. A to Subpart B)

## **10. Date Prepared or Updated**

August 18, 2022